

FLIGHT JACKET

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Sgt. James Forte, loadmaster, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and a 36-year-old Ridgefield, Conn. native, watches the last load of Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq workers exit his cargo aircraft at Al Taqqadum, Iraq Jan. 26. Two crews and two aircraft spent a majority of the day ferrying hundreds of Iraqi election workers from Najaf, Iraq for the Jan. 30 elections. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

Al Asad Iraqis vote on historic election day

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

3rd MAF Combat Correspondent

NEAR BAGHDADI, Iraq — For the first time in half a century, the Iraqi people voted in free elections after national polls opened at 7 a.m. Jan. 30.

Iraqi security forces and Marines overseeing the democratic process raised security levels and officials expected the elections to go smoothly at local polls throughout Al Anbar Province.

Initially daunted by fears of scattered violence at the polls, Iraqi locals overcame their worries and turned out to cast their

vote enthusiastically for a positive future of their country.

Helping to set the stage for a peaceful election, Marines with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing were congratulated on their efforts to support a democratic Iraq.

"The entire Wing team has done a terrific job setting the stage for elections (in Al Anbar Province) with truly all-star decision-making, planning and execution at every level," said Maj. Gen. Keith J. Stalder, commanding general, 3rd MAF.

Some Marines made a special effort to help encourage local Iraqis to cast their votes.

"I explained to them that it is important to vote," said Lance

Cpl. Mediya Abakar, supply clerk, Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3, 3rd MAF, who, as an Arabic-speaking interpreter, met with Iraqi election workers at Al Asad before election day.

Abakar also reassured the workers that the Marines were committed to ensuring security at the polls and that any fears of violence should not deter them from the overall importance of exercising their democratic right to choose their own leaders.

"Most of them want to vote, but have security concerns," said Abakar. "I told them that the Marines would be there to protect them."

Bone marrow donations give hope of life

Compiled by CPAO

MCAS Miramar

A bone marrow donor registration drive will be held today from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Exchange. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No appointment is necessary and all that is required to register is a simple blood test.

Registration is free for all servicemembers,

their families and Department of Defense civilian employees and contractors between the ages of 18 and 60. You can register even if you have taken anti-malaria medication, received any immunizations, had a recent tattoo, or served in the United Kingdom, Middle East or Africa.

An estimated 30,000 children and adults in the U.S.—500 in the military alone—are diagnosed with leukemia, aplastic anemia or other fatal blood diseases each year. For many, the

only hope for survival is a marrow transplant.

Unfortunately, nearly 70 percent of these patients cannot find a match within their own family. They need to find unrelated marrow donors—people who have volunteered to donate marrow if ever matched.

The procedure is simple. At the drive, a tablespoon of blood will be drawn, which will be Human Leukocyte Antigen type-tested. Next, your name is placed on the national registry. If

someone who is sick matches your HLA type and you are still willing to donate, you and your spouse will be transported to Washington, D.C., at government expense for the uncomplicated marrow donation procedure. The procedure is minor and takes less than one hour to complete. Only a very small amount of your marrow is needed to save a life and your bone marrow will replenish itself within days.

For more information, visit www.dodmarrow.com.

Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station



75°/46°
Today



75°/48°
Saturday



69°/46°
Sunday

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benefits
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